



Environmental Sustainability Committee Retreat
September 5, 2019
Summary and Notes from Retreat

Retreat Purpose: To strengthen relationships and to clarify the Committee's desired purpose, key goals, and ways of operating

Desired Outcomes: By the time we leave the meeting, we will have:

- Gotten to know one another better, understanding our "whys" and our work preferences
- Clarified our purpose -- the desired role and key responsibilities for the ESC
- Created agreements to guide how we will work together and how the Committee will operate
- Defined the ESC's key goals for the coming 12 months and next steps needed to move forward productively

Agenda:

1. Overview of Day, Check in and Agreements
 2. Who Are We? Getting to Know Our Colleagues
 3. Themes from Interviews with ESC
 4. Clarifying Our Purpose – What's Our Key Role? The Impact We Want to Have?
 5. Developing Our Operating Guidelines and Agreements for How We Will Work Together
 6. Identifying Our Strategic Goals and the Structure to Help Us Achieve Them
 7. Next Steps / Wrap up / Check out
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1. **Overview/Agreements.** The facilitator reviewed the plan for the day, requested that we follow five key ground rules / agreements, and the group had a check in with a question they shared about.
 2. **Who Are We? Getting to Know Our Colleagues.** The Committee participated in a group activity that enabled them to get to know the similarities and differences in their work preferences on a range of factors including how they process information, make decisions, need for closure, handling conflict, and receiving feedback. Throughout this process they noted how these preferences tend to "show up" in their meetings and their group dynamic. They concluded by sharing why they chose to be a part of the ESC – what is important about it to them.
 3. **Themes from Interviews with ESC.** The facilitator shared the key themes from her interviews with the Committee members as well their requests for the retreat (which helped to form the agenda design for today). Committee members agreed that these

themes accurately depict the current state of the Committee and its operation. We emphasized that this provides a starting point, describing where we are now, and that our focus today will be to look ahead and plan for how they want to refocus and reconnect going forward.

4. Clarifying Our Purpose – What’s Our Key Role? The Impact We Want to Have?

Our role: *The Committee reviewed the Resolution creating the ESC (R-14-68) and discussed an updated understanding of what it means to “act as an advocate,” “serve in an advisory role,” “provide a means for promoting discussion and education,” “advise and support recycling program,” etc.*

Notes captured from the conversation:

- Advise City Council in an active, connected way – help them make better decisions regarding the environment
- Bring / invite subject matter expertise to advance policies
- Keep Council engaged on issues - introduce issues that are bubbling up
- Determine metrics that will show the city is moving the dial on key environmental indicators

What We Want Our Experience on this Committee to be like / impact we want to have:

- Be a part of groups (in the community), having vital conversations
- A sense of significant accomplishment
- Move the needle on City policies
- Connect a lot of dots in the City (schools, stormwater, non-profits)
- Prepare the City for major environmental challenges – water quality, climate, etc.
- Educate citizens and use effective means of getting important information out there
- Fairfax City to be THE sustainable example
- Visible to citizens – they will know we’re here
- No longer be the “ugly step sister” of BACs
- We create structure and follow up in how we manage our work and agendas – close the loop by summarizing what was done about the issues previously discussed

- 5. Developing Our Operating Guidelines and Agreements for How We Will Work Together.** The Committee discussed some of the issues that have at times hindered their effectiveness and then developed some new ways of operating that they would like to commit to that will create better communication and a more seamless way of working together.

Agreements:

- Communication outside ESC with City officials: No surprises – communicate via email to Chair and staff when we will be meeting with officials regarding ESC business
- Agendas: Verbally and by including an agenda item, invite members to provide additional comments during meetings (for example, school Board liaison, Business liaison, etc.)
- Nonmembers attending meetings will sit in seating behind the Committee table
- Only Committee members will have name tags

- Public comments will be recognized and reserved for the end of the meeting, rather than interspersed throughout the agenda
- Invite the public to sign up in advance of meeting if they'd like to speak during the Public comment period; public comments will be limited to 3 minutes per person
- Meeting minutes will be distributed no later than one week following the meeting to enable committee members to follow up and stay connected to what is happening
- Members must attend at least 6 meetings per year at minimum to remain on the Committee
- Staff will survey members on preferred meeting day (ahead of City Council meetings)
- We will adopt and consistently use Roberts Rules for meeting management
- Limit debate through Robert's Rules of order so we don't get bogged down
- Discuss ways to limit our Committee's "band width" so we don't focus on too many things at the expense of bringing things to completion

6. **Identifying Our Strategic Goals and the Structure to Help Us Achieve Them.** We ran out of time before we had a chance to address the goal conversation and agreed that this is an item that they feel would be easy to discuss at their October meeting.

*** Additional points raised apart from the scheduled agenda items:*

- City Council member Jon Stehle attended part of the meeting and spoke with the Committee about the energized efforts to partner with GMU on sustainability issues, the opportunity to benefit from capstone projects, and the synergy with 500+ faculty members in support of advancing the City on environmental issues. He encouraged the Committee to not wait for direction from Council but to initiate ideas / best practices with Council and to be a catalyst or change agent in partnership with Council. He considers the Committee to be on par with any other Board or Commission and requested that the ESC be in regular contact with Council. He affirmed a commitment to having more regular, meaningful dialogue with the ESC.
- City Manager Rob Stalzer attended part of the meeting and shared with the ESC some highlights from the City Council / leadership retreat over the summer and discussed the importance of environmental concerns and sustainability as a key component of every one of the five strategic goals of the city. He shared that there will be a work session with the ESC and Council this fall, possibly in early November.

Next Steps: The Committee agreed to discuss during their October meeting:

- What are the most important goals we would like to focus on?
- The current subcommittee structure – does it still make sense? Address imbalance of Committee resources / people supporting each subcommittee
- Address possibility raised in retreat of aligning the ESC's goals to the goals in the City's Comprehensive plan – in this way, the ESC is working toward supporting the direction City Council is moving in and ensuring that environmental considerations are part of that direction